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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CANBERRA 000755

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y SUBJECT LINE

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SUBJECT: CHINESE DISSIDENT CHEN ZIMING CALLS ON DCM

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Classified By: Deputy Chief Of Mission Daniel A. Clune. Reason: 1.4 (D  
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#### SUMMARY

11. (C/NF) During a call on the DCM on July 23, Chinese dissident Chen Ziming said that while the economic situation of ordinary Chinese is improving, the democratic rights situation is not. Chen, who has been visiting Australia for the past two weeks and has spent a week in New Zealand, noted that this is his first trip outside of China since Tiananmen, but that he does not expect trouble when he returns to Beijing on July 30. He will travel to Inner Mongolia during the Olympics because of anticipated increased restrictions by security authorities. Chen was appreciative of U.S. efforts to promote democracy and human rights in China in general and for its representations on his behalf to Beijing. Chen noted that the burgeoning middle class that he estimated to be currently at some 50 to 80 million people is not beholden to the Party for its livelihood and will eventually be a force for increased democracy in China. He expressed surprise that there had not been greater Australian interest in China's human rights situation, commenting that this had turned his trip into more of a vacation than he had expected. Chen said that Australia has never appeared to him to be very interested in being assertive to support human rights in China. End Summary.

#### DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT IN CHINA

12. (C) Chen was accompanied by his wife Wang Zhihong, Mr. Zhang Xiaogang, Secretary of Independent Chinese Pen, affiliate of the worldwide writers association International Pen, Mr. Fang Yuan, a Chinese dissident based in Canberra, and Mr. Chen Yonglin who is now Secretary of the Chinese Dissidents Association in Australia. Polcouns and EconCouns also sat in at the meeting. Chen was appreciative of U.S. representations to Beijing authorities over the years on human rights and democracy issues and said that he himself has benefited. Chen noted that he had been in prison 13 years for his dissident activities at the time of Tiananmen Square and had his democratic rights, including freedom to speak to the press, seriously circumscribed following his release. He described the Democracy Movement in China as a "three steps forward two steps back" process. Though some freedom of expression is allowed for ordinary Chinese, from the late 1980s leading dissidents have been increasingly restricted in publicizing their views, Chen asserted. He

added that a 200 member democracy think tank that he had set up no longer exists.

13. (C) The DCM told Chen that the one of the core objectives of our diplomatic engagement with China is the promotion of human rights and political reform. The U.S. raises human rights issues in nearly all of its high-level meetings with the Chinese government. As Chen had noted the U.S. raises both individual cases as well as the need for China to carry out reforms to protect its citizens, rights. The DCM added that the U.S. felt that the U.S. - China Human Rights Dialogue held in May was constructive. We made it clear to the Chinese, both before and during the Dialogue, that we wanted it to be "results-based." It is too early to judge whether the Dialogue was a success. In the meantime, we will continue to take every opportunity to raise with the Qwe will continue to take every opportunity to raise with the Chinese government our concerns regarding specific human rights issues. Chen responded that among western nations the U.S. has clearly done the most to promote democracy and human rights in China.

#### GROWING MIDDLE CLASS WILL POSE CHALLENGE

14. (C) China's growing middle class will over the next decade become a force for increased democratization in China, Chen said. He estimated that there are currently 50-80 million people in China's middle class and that number is set to expand dramatically over the next 10 years. This members of this powerful new class are not beholden to the Chinese Communist Party for their livelihoods and will be more likely to challenge the authorities in the longer term. Chen commented that while the Party is still very firm in controlling overtly political activity, it has already lost many of its tools of coercion over day-to-day life. Most of the new middle class is willing to accept for now this implicit deal of staying out of politics in return for

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greater freedom to live their daily lives, he said. Chen expressed confidence that any attempt by the Party to regain the coercive tools over day to day life that it had as late as the early 1990s would face strong opposition from urban Chinese and particularly the new middle class.

#### WILL NOT BE IN BEIJING FOR THE OLYMPICS

15. (C) Chen, who has been visiting Australia for the past two weeks and has spent a week in New Zealand, noted that this is his first trip outside of China since Tiananmen, but that he does not expect trouble when he returns to Beijing on July 30. He will travel to Inner Mongolia during the Olympics because of anticipated increased restrictions by security authorities. He added that the number of political dissidents in Beijing is growing (to 5-10,000 over the next 5 years) and that authorities will have increased difficulties keeping them all under surveillance. Chen also said that though police personnel are getting better equipped, their motivation appears to be flagging, with some telling him almost apologetically that they are working for the security agencies simply "to feed their families."

16. (C/NF) Asked about his reception in Australia, Chen said that he was surprised and disappointed at how uninterested Australians seemed to be in human rights in China. He said that Australia had never seemed to take a particularly assertive approach in raising human rights with the Chinese Government and that the Australian Embassy in Beijing had never been active in reaching out to dissidents. Chen said he had met with Graham Fletcher, the DFAT First Assistant Secretary for North Asia (and former DCM in Beijing) for an interesting but not very substantive discussion. This had been his only contact with the Australian Government, he said, adding that attendance at his lectures had been disappointing. Of those who came, almost all were ethnic Chinese, mainly students studying in Australia. As a result,

Chen laughingly said that his trip to Australia had turned into more of a vacation than he had expected.

COMMENT

17. (C) The meeting had been sought by Chen who had spoken earlier at a Sydney Catholic club promoting his new book on the 30 years of reform in China. It is rare for Beijing to allow a dissident of Chen's visibility the freedom to travel to and from China. Nonetheless, Chen did not appear apprehensive over Chinese authorities apparently expecting little backlash from his actions while "vacationing" overseas, particularly his meetings with U.S. and Australian authorities.